Rhode Island School of Design

Step 10
An Experiment on Representing
Personal Emotions with
Imperseonal Elements

Jinhong Cai
Digital + Media
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Acknowledgement

Step 10

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Digital + Media in the Department of Digital + Media of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

by
Jinhong Cai
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Approved by Master’s Examination Committee:

Mark Cetilia, Critic, Department of Digital + Media, Thesis Chair

Leah Beeferman, Assistant Professor, Experimental and Foundation Studies, Thesis Advisor

Fletcher Bach, Critic, Experimental & Foundation Studies, Guest Critic
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We are definitely all torn between polarities...maybe?

Talking personal stories out loud to people other than myself, displaying obscure emotions on social media where distant acquaintances can see them, exhibiting artwork discussing vulnerable emotions in a gallery where strangers can potentially see me deeper than myself... all of these actions feel like shouting into the void – knowing that it is meaningless, but still remaining hopeful for a faint response in the deep time it exists – dancing between craving complete withdrawal and yearning for soul-deep intimacy.

I want to share everything I have been through with people around me, but once I share it, I will instantly regret it. “Is it too much?” I think to myself looking at my friends’ mixed reactions; some are deeply empathizing, lost in their own memory, some are trying to squeeze words out of this damp silent air, and some are just pretending they did not hear at all. “I guess sometimes my experiences are not for everyone’s palette, maybe I should just stop sharing for good...”

I do not want to share anything with anyone at all: all I ever post are photos and videos of trees, grass, sky, waves... I look at them like I am looking at myself in the mirror or when I look at a funny word too long, growing unfamiliar as I stare longer. Is it possible to add personal feelings to impersonal elements? Can people feel my emotions when they stare at my nature posts long enough?

Get close to me, but stay far far away, please.
Abstract

*Step 10* is an experiment on provoking empathy through abstracted elements within my studio practice. I am proposing to craft an emotional piece without leaning on my identity. This written thesis consists of two parts: narrative prose and an explanation of my studio practice. While the installation is entirely devoid of cultural or personal references, this text-based thesis is full of them because it is intended to inform whoever is interested in learning more about the motive behind this creation.

The questions I bought into the thought and creation process are: Can a piece of art still successfully bring out emotions in the viewer without involving the artist, their identity, and their story? How can an artist balance between forcing and allowing vulnerability in the viewers through a piece of work? How much is too much intimacy?

The question I proposed in this thesis has yet to be concluded, as they are highly subjective and theoretical. Please contact me at jcart43777@gmail.com if you have any questions or would like to provide some feedback.
Narrative Prose

The first part of the thesis project is a creative writing and design project composed of ten pieces of prose, which are five pairs of short stories, exposing my experience of living a double life between my home culture and current environment. My narrative writing explores the feeling of being stuck in between through the rawest form of storytelling. Each pair of stories showcases an aspect of my experience that created conflict and paradox within my perspective, including drugs, sex, emotions, body image, and political media coverage. All pieces of prose are based on my real personal experiences. By presenting what happened without going into the emotional analysis too much, I am inviting the readers to dive into these memories with me and experience what I feel when I am thinking of these pairs of snippets of my life together.

The prose is printed in English and Chinese with contradictory colors on vellum, a translucent paper medium. Vellum provides a translucent look that almost blurs the content, but if one focuses and tries hard enough to read. When all the pages overlap, the words become a puddle of ink that is indistinguishable — a close representation of how I feel about these experiences. In addition to that, the messiness of Chinese characters and English letters overlapping mimics the process I go through when I am actively thinking in both languages. I hope to provoke similar feelings of dissonance in the readers and viewers. I would like to stress again that the narrative prose included in this thesis book is a separate project under the same
theme. The writing provides background to the dissonant feeling I am inspired by but reading it is not a requirement to understand or experience the installation.

Later this thesis argues against involving identity within a visual art piece, which contradicts how intimate this writing project is. However, I decided to include the prose project because this is where my studio practice originated. My studio project, although informed by culturally related emotions, is more concentrated on the presentation, form, and painterliness guided by intuition.

In my logic, the connection between artists and viewers is usually more abstract than that between writers and readers. I am more drawn to visual art that requires minimum logical or textual understanding, those can elicit a feeling or stimulate a vibe without requiring meticulous understanding. When I lack words to describe my feelings on a visual art piece, I describe the work as “beautiful.” Here, beautiful is only partly describing the aesthetic; instead, it is emphasizing the beauty of what more than the eyes could see. Writing can be beautiful too, however, beautiful writing (especially fiction, prose, and non-fiction essay) is more about the emotional value rather than a combination of emotional and aesthetic value like that of visual art pieces. I think about writing as providing a more direct kind of communication than visual art— the connection between the author and the reader is concrete – connection is made from understanding the words, and the narrative the words construct. Writing lets the readers empathize through consciously understanding the narrative, while visual artworks can incite an experience beyond verbal or textual understanding.

Therefore, for me, stories can be personal, but art should not.
Did you know that the Chinese government put up a fake sun in Beijing because the air quality is so bad they cannot see anything in the sky? I'm an American-born Chinese, but it's late with an eerie blend of pity, curiosity, and condescension. "You know what the craziest part is?" she grates at me with anticipation. "What?". Having never heard of such things, I am partly genuinely interested and partly playing along with her enthusiasm. She takes another inhalation as if that sentence takes that much effort to finish. "The craziest part is, the people in Beijing believed it!" Her eyes are almost popping out of her sockets and I can tell she is waiting for my reaction. "What?" I am truly confused. For a moment I am not sure if I heard her wrong or if my English was kind of broken. "No, it is true. The Chinese government hung up a fake sun to fool the people and they actually believed it!". It is almost like my ignorance of this incident is making her more excited. I am not surprised you do not know of this because, after all, China has the great firewall. It is hard to notice but there is a smirk slowly emerging on her face. There is a complicated feeling brewing within me a mixture of anger at her assumption of confusion about what she described, and fear of it actually being true. I stop talking and just pretend to perform in the way that she wants to see, surprised at awe of her knowledge of the country that I am from, with a glint of shame that I did not know as much about my own country as she does. I think I gave a pretty good performance. She walks away, satisfactorily with her chin pointing up slightly like a smug character in cartoons. Or maybe I am imagining the story. (To be continued...)
Let’s now address how I started this studio project. The most prominent question at the beginning was “What am I trying to say in this piece?” After a lot of reading, journaling, and reflecting, I realized that I am not trying to talk about the cultural differences between China and the US, I am not trying to convey the pain and trauma I experienced growing up, I am trying to have the audience feel the essential state of being me — being stuck in between, isolated, looking from the outside in, but in the midst of it all the time.

The intention of this installation is to get the viewers to experience the feeling of dissonance without knowing my personal and cultural background. With that mission in mind, I completed a work named “This World We Don’t Live In,” in spring 2022 that conveys a feeling of being in two places at once but on an abstract level. I started that project by collecting objects on the streets of Providence, Rhode Island that are slightly out of place. The most important reason that I chose these objects was that I empathize with them.
sometimes I feel like a fork in the toolshed
sometimes I feel like a sandwich on the bus stop bench
sometimes I feel like a hanger floating on the long long river
sometimes I feel like a fallen fire hydrant by the side of the road
sometimes I feel like a broken pipe that is constantly crying and puking
sometimes I feel like a slightly deformed streetlight among the other perfect ones
sometimes I feel like I am out of place
sometimes I feel like I am abandoned
sometimes I feel like I am disruptive
sometimes I feel like I am useless
sometimes I feel like I am alone
sometimes I feel like I am imperfect
sometimes I feel objects like they are me
However, because these objects were all found, captured, and recreated in the context of Providence, the project gave a misconception that I was making a comment on the essence of the city when in fact I was talking about how I feel. That is why in my thesis project I aim to further abstract the imagery and blur the origin of these symbols enough to be unrecognizable but still provide a feeling or evoke some kind of emotion.
From this practice, I started developing my thesis project “Step 10.” The project was named Step 10 to further avoid cultural symbols and personal references. To help readers better understand the name, I have attached the installation guide on page 20.
Step 1: Take a camera and go outside

Step 2: Snap Snap

Step 3: Appreciate your photos

Step 4: Cut and paste however you want

Step 5: Ask yourself: does it look good?

Step 6: If yes, continue to Step 7.
If no, go back to Step 4.

Step 7: print it
Laser cut it
Collage it
Paint it
Sculpt it
Make it
Install it

Step 8: Step back and ask yourself: does it look good?

Step 9: If yes, continue to Step 10.
If no, go back to Step 7.

Step 10: Enjoy
Step 10

Step 10 is a multimedia video installation consisting of engraved, partly mirrored PET-G sheets, acetate, vinyl fabric, and acrylic sheets. The video components are footage taken from nature. The original footage is collaged in a rectangular form to emphasize its digitalness. I have chosen elements of water, air, and soil as the base elements of my installation to avoid specific cultural references. I am trying to communicate a feeling of dissonance by playing with distortion (skew and reflection), material, and scale.

To play with distortion, I have created special projection screens from laser-engraved PET-G, that are distorted with heat, and poured with silver nitrate in selected parts to create a reflective surface. The projection screens are hung to reflect and interact. The reflections create new images when there is a movement within the video. Displaying the apparatus is equally, if not more, important than the resulting collage of projection and reflection on the wall. I would like the viewers to see the final image and how the original projection is distorted through these lenses.

The video, the acetate print, the laser-engraved PET-G sheets, and the curtains are all made from the same source images. They are manipulated through different materials, magnified, and shrunk based on the medium and placement. The installation aims to achieve a sense of dissonance through repetition and distortion of images.

Enjoy.
How it all started

You are stuck in between. What are you feeling?

Let’s begin this thesis with a visualization practice. This is a scene that touched me deeply from The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia, a science fiction novel written by Ursula K. Le Guin. Imagine seeing this: “The shadows moved about him, but he sat unmoving as Anarres rose above the alien hills, at her full, mottled dun and bluish-white, lambent. The light of his world filled his empty hands”(90). Imagine being in an alien space while feeling the moonlight from your mother planet shining down on your palms. So close yet so far away. You are stuck in between. What are you feeling? Sad, nostalgic, being at two places at once... complicated?

Overall, I think this scene is transient and peaceful; it also captures the feeling of being in-between – being in two places at once, constantly feeling contradicted, and confused – qualities that I hope to present in my work. For me, being in between is like being stuck. Being raised in China and moving to the US at eighteen created a slit in my life, a slit in which I am stuck. The dissonance I experienced led to a feeling of being constantly in-between: between cultures, between Western and Eastern media perspectives, between physical and digital reality, and between the selves that I present in different scenarios.

Although my cultural experience has greatly informed my studio practice, I aim to eliminate cultural or identity references in my work. But why, you ask? To put it simply:
I do not want to be involved in identity politics. Let me explain this further: I would like to avoid being culturally tokenized. Once the viewer perceives the artist, they perceive the work differently, especially with non-western artists.

I have roughly categorized artworks that involve cultural contexts into four categories as seen below:

1. Artworks that are inspired by and realistically represent culture or history;

2. Artworks that are inspired by and involve cultural and historical context but discuss political topics stylistically;

3. Inspired by and involving cultural and historical context more abstractly and focusing more on the form and method of the work; and

4. Inspired by but does not involve the use of culture or historical indication.

To further elaborate on this categorization, I have attached a scatter plot chart below, including artworks for each category on pages 40-41.
For category one, I have included a classic historical painting, *Coronation of Napoleon* painted in 1807 by Jacques-Louis David. This is a classical artwork that is inspired by and attempts to realistically represent historical events. The level of historicity is exceptionally high while the level of traction is close to zero – it could almost function as a historical picture, except it was painted – this put this painting in category one.

For category two, I have included two pieces of artwork: Cao Fei’s photography work, *A Ming at Home*, and Dana Schutz’s *Open Casket*. These two works represent a spectrum that category two falls into. Cao Fei’s photography looks realistic but the scenario is fake. Dana Schutz’s painting is based on a historical event but the painting is stylistic. These two artists are talking about culture and historic content but in a more stylistic way.

Cao Fei, *A Ming at Home* (From Cosplayers Series), 2004. Inkjet print, 75 x 100 cm
I would like to discuss the painting *Open Casket* a little further. When it was displayed at the Whitney Biennial in 2017, it instantly became a controversial topic because a white painter, Dana Schutz, painted a black cultural event, Emmett Till, a black 14-year-old boy who was lynched by two white men in Mississippi in 1955. In this case, the black cultural event was likely used as a token to put this painting on the map through controversy. Although the painter’s intention might not be that, it is certainly perceived as such. In Dana Schutz’s case, she is not even using her own identity, which made her case more controversial. Therefore I would like to discuss the usage of culture or historical context in general.
From my observation of the current art climate and my readings: work that celebrates identity or involves culture and politics is more easily recognized but limits the understanding of the viewers. Gordon Hall in his article “Why I Don’t Talk About ‘The Body’: A Polemic” (Hall, 2020) notes that

> When we parse human beings in this way within art institutional structures, we participate in a culture in which artists’ bodies are used as visual evidence of their demographic categories. Speaking in this way makes it possible for institutions to frame artists primarily in terms of their identities.

In this quote, Hall emphasizes that using identity politics in art practice limits the artists’ exploration and expression of their identities. I would like to extend this argument further – the usage of the cultural identity of any kind limits artists in the cultural context they have incorporated.
For category three, I have included Ai Wei Wei’s *Fragments* and Charisse Pearlina Weston’s *The Immaterial Imaginary of Rhythm Moistened Black Salt into Translucence*. Both works are highly abstracted but there are still visible elements of culture: Ai We Wei’s usage of parts of beams and pillars from dismantled temples of the Qing Dynasty and Charisse Peralina Weston’s usage of text related to black culture. The cultural element is still visible, it just takes a little digging.

Ai Weiwei, Fragments, 2005, Ironwood (tieli wood), table, chairs, parts of beams and pillars from dismantled temples of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), 196 9/10 × 334 3/5 × 275 3/5 in
I was first struck by the sculptural aesthetic aspect of Weston’s installation and sculpture works. As I communicated with her more about her practice through emails, I have come to understand that she is “not talking about making a beautiful art object; that [her] work functions in that regard is just a byproduct.” Weston further explains that the abstraction and form used in her practice carry deeper meanings involving black culture and the struggle of black people, and emphasizes that she is “prioritizing making the form of the work and the methods used to produce it coincide with the conceptual proposition of the work.”

Inspired by Weston’s work and conversation, I would like to push my practice even further on the abstracted spectrum of artworks that involve culture and historical background by barely using any indication within my thesis project, which leads us to category four.

Charisse Pearlina Weston, The immaterial imaginary of rhythm moistened black salt into translucence. 2016, replacement frame glass, inkjet photographs, text on vellum, wood sculpture, dimensions variable
I have included *Devourment* by Liu Wei, a Chinese artist based in Beijing for category four. This sculpture piece consists of abstract and original forms connected by iron wires and wood frames. Although there is no indication of cultural or historical context, the title gives a base tone to the piece. The use of material reminds the viewers of industrialization but the overall message is obscure. What the viewers feel is very subjective and fluid – a mood, an emotion, a vibe, so to say. The high level of abstraction and extremely low level of historicity put this piece of work in category four. Although he works with no uniting stylistic tendency, the Saatchi Gallery finds a uniting theme of “a sentiment of excess, corruption, and aggression reflective of cultural anxiety.”

Liu Wei, *Devourment*, 2019, Aluminum plate, cement, wood, resin, and gypsum, 92.52 x 70.87 x 88.58 inches, Venice Biennale, Padigilone
Photo by Roberto Marossi
Could my work communicate the anxiety and struggle I go through as a person living between cultures without any cultural reference and context indication?

Ultimately, my thesis is discussing the use of culture and historical context in artworks. I care about the cultural aspect, but within the scope of this thesis, I am experimenting with creating work without clear visual or textual indications.
A scatter plot chart including artworks for four categories, artworks are scattered in the chart according to level of historicity and abstraction.

category 1: artworks that are inspired by and specifically referencing ancient or historical cultural and historical contexts for distant political, religious, and cultural origins:

- category 2: artworks that are inspired by and involving cultural and historical contexts for distant political, religious, and cultural origins:

- category 3: artworks that are inspired by and involving cultural and historical contexts for distant political, religious, and cultural origins:

- category 4: artworks that are inspired by and involving cultural and historical contexts for distant political, religious, and cultural origins.

Abstraction
Weaver, Fragments, 105, Ironwood (Huali), table, chairs, art of beams and slats from dismantled temples of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) 6 9/10 x 33 3/5 x 7 3/5 in.

Deaan Schutz, Open Casket, oil on canvas, 2016, on view at the Whitney Biennial 2017.

David, Jacques-Louis, "The Coronation of Napoleon," oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris, 1807
Thoughts on My Practice

What I am trying to let the viewers experience in this piece is the feeling of dissonance. This feeling of dissonance, I believe, is common, and universal. We experience it when we receive food that does not match with advertising photos; we experience it when we read a book and watch the movie version of it; we experience it when we meet movie stars in real life. In a way, we are all living between our expectations and reality.

My works invoke perspective and the feeling of dissonance using room-scale installations. Within these human-scaled boxes, I condense my observations from different worlds - my past and present, physical and digital reality, and different perceptions – into digestible, immersive, and meditative experiences. Some examples of room-scaled installations that I have made are: Environmental Identity 2020, Sleeping in the Iron House, Dreaming of an Iron House 2021, and This World We Don’t Live In 2022. The scale of the projects is a particularly important part because it allows the audience to enter the piece and experience a little separation from reality. Claire Bishop in “Viewers as Producers” (2006) notes that

[...] the work of art should actively intervene in and provide a model for allowing viewers to be involved in the processes of production: ‘this apparatus is better, the more consumers it is able to turn into producers - that is, the more readers or spectators into collaborators (11, Bishop).

In a way, my pieces are not complete without the audi-
ence’s participation -- physically or emotionally.

Elements of media and technology are perennials in my practice. They showed me a version of the world beyond my immediate environment, especially when I was younger, and inspired me to expand past what I learned from my upbringing. Western cartoons, TV shows, and movies painted a reality that is drastically different from where I was living. In China, spoken or not, under government control and beyond, there is a standard for everything. I felt boxed in, with no room to grow. I fled to the United States – with my expectations built from illegal copies of Western media that this is a new, free world – only to realize that it is a fancier, slightly bigger box with a different set of oppressive rules. In the United States, it is controlled by capitalism instead of by the government – everything revolves around money, efficiency, and social status... However, I want to stress that I am not trying to dissect the cultural, economical, or governmental differences between China and the US. Instead, it is the dissonance I experienced that I try to convey through my piece.

Connecting back to my previous argument that using cultural elements might limit viewers’ perspective on reading the piece, I am avoiding using demographic as a comfort zone for creating within this project. I would like to propose a challenge to myself to evoke feelings without using my identity. Hall also argues in the article that using identity politics as a methodology has multiple negative implications and effects:

Firstly, it flattens the specifics of artists’ practices and their individual works, because when artwork is functioning as an example of a demographic type, it is usually not being taken seriously as worthy of critical investment [...] Secondly, in many cases, these types of engagements do not actually reflect a lasting curatorial and financial investment
in an artist's practice, because these sorts of inclusions tend to be temporary and forward-facing, especially in the case of performance and other public programs. [...] Finally, from the point of view of a museum or a curator who is operating within this body-as-evidence-of difference rubric, artists-of-difference who do not make this difference publicly visible in their work are essentially useless, because they do not help create a moment of public visibility of inclusion.

Therefore, I understand the use of identity politics in my practice as a way to limit interpretations of my work to demographic categories and culturally specific contexts. Most importantly, I want the viewers to experience my piece, not analyze it. Precisely because I am aware of how emotional and impactful my stories are, I don’t want the viewers to feel something because they pity or empathize with my experiences.

Instead of thinking about the artist’s background story, the technology, the mechanism, or the creative motive behind the piece, I want the viewers to walk out of the piece thinking about themselves and their own experiences of dissonance. I want them to feel – in the purest form – through my piece. I want them to experience an intangible feeling and walk out of my piece feeling... complicated, finding it difficult to articulate the experience.

I have separated my thesis project into two parts, narrative prose, and physical installation which are independent of each other and will not be displayed together. The way this thesis is set up is very similar to how my nature posts work on social media: posting a sky picture that makes me feel sad, hoping people who are also saddened by it can come to ask me how I am doing. In the same way, I want to share my intimate side, and I hope that the feelings it evokes will resonate with my viewers.
Narrative prose is included in the thesis book, while the physical installation was displayed at the RISD 2023 Grad Show. The narrative prose consists of highly personal and sensitive true stories, which are included here as a supplement but are not necessarily required. The physical installation is entirely devoid of reference to personal experience or culturally specific symbols. Instead, it will consist of natural elements mostly because I use them as a way to project my feelings on social media, but also because it is universal enough for viewers to not associate them with culture or identity.

Lastly, this thesis was written as a thought process to guide readers through my thoughts and my practice. All claims written in this book are within the context of my personal practice.
This thesis and my time during the master's program at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) have been a true adventure for myself and my art practice.

Before my time at RISD, I was obsessed with representing facts or objects and weaving meaning into my practice to the point I no longer felt the emotion in my work, instead, only seeing and talking about the meaning, the facts, the method... During my time here, I am learning to re-trust my intuition and go back to my original interest in making images. Instead of creating work out of meanings, I am creating work based on feelings, which would hopefully transmit through my installation. I am a firm believer that art can transmit feelings and emotions. If you feel something, you don’t have to read text or know the history to understand the mood.

If you are still reading, I want to first say thank you – for reading and participating. I would also like to say thank you to my thesis committee, Mark Cetlia, Leah Beeferman, and Fletcher Bach, for your feedback along the process. I would like to then say thank you to Shona Kitchen, our department head, and Stephen Cooke, our department technician. I would like to lastly say thank you to Prateek Shankar, Maxwell Fertik, Jeanette Consentini, Ozzy Abaddon and other friends that have helped me along the way.

To anyone that is reading this thesis, I am not sure I have found the answer to all the questions I have listed in the beginning, but I hope we get to enjoy this journey together regardless.
Appendix
Jinhong Cai

Step 10

An artist’s book on Jinhong Cai’s thesis project Step 10 at Digital+Media Department, Rhode Island School of Design.

Each edition is signed, dated and numbered by the artist.

Printed by Jinhong Cai, Providence, Rhode Island.

Edition ( ) from an edition of 12

Printed on Vellum, Paper Works Color Paperbag, and White paper

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Content

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“毒品是万万不能接触的。”

坐在桌子对面的警察放松地靠在老旧的木质办公椅上，椅子发出难听的吱吱声，声音大到难以忽略。他挺直上半身好让制服平整些，伸手进口袋里摸索着什么，“特别是大麻，在美国很普遍，你们一定要小心，不要接触这些东西。会让你产生幻觉的，在那种精神状态下很有可能伤害到自己。”他从制服的左边口袋拿出一包香烟，右边取出一个打火机，悠闲地在室内点燃了一根，深深地吸了一口，他吸的是如此用力，我能够看到他的胸腔扩张了很多然后随着他吐气又缓缓泄气瘪下去的动作。从他嘴里吐出的烟雾很快吞噬了坐在桌子这一侧的我们，几个要去美国留学的中国学生。

我们正在警察局里听一个反上瘾/反毒品的讲座 – 一个对尼古丁上瘾到没法抵挡诱惑以至于在室内吸烟的警察正在讲述反上瘾。出于礼貌我没有咳嗽出声，也没有指出这个场景中的荒谬成分。透过烟雾盯着警官还在移动的嘴，我开始想象他吸入那口香烟时的感受，尼古丁给他带来的巨大诱惑和终于摄入后的轻松感对他来说不算是上瘾的征兆吗？他自己不清楚自己的语言和行为是多么互相冲突吗？

我不确定这个讲座除了让我感到荒谬和逆反之外还有什么用。
“Never touch drugs.”

The policeman sitting across from the table leisurely leans back on his mottled wooden chair, making it squeak so loudly it cannot be ignored. He uncurls his upper body to search for something in his uniform pockets, “Especially Marijuana, it is everywhere in the US. Be careful. Do not touch it. It makes you hallucinate. You can harm yourself in that state of mind.” From his left pocket, he takes out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the right. He takes his time lighting a cigarette within a closed room, inhaling so deeply I can see his chest cavity expand. He sighs out the smoke with a noticeable smile. The smoke from his mouth quickly devours us, a few students about to go to the US for college education, sitting on this side of the table.

We are in an anti-addiction/anti-drug workshop in the police station, an anti-addiction workshop given by a policeman clearly addicted to nicotine. So addicted that he needed to light a cigarette indoors with company right across from him. Out of civility, I did not let my cough out, nor did I point out the irony of his action in this scenario. Staring through the smoke particles into the policeman’s moving mouth, I wonder what he felt when that cigarette hit. Is that sense of craving and release that nicotine brought not addiction to him? Is he not aware of the contradiction between his action and his words?

I am not sure what this workshop has done other than make my rebellious mind go wild.
Get High

It is two in the morning. Here I am, laying on the carpet, staring at the pattern on the ceiling.

It is moving in a bizarrely beautiful way – it is exactly how I imagined microorganisms' movement would look like – randomly wiggling around. The acid tab I took seven hours ago is still slowly seeping into my consciousness. “Isn’t this the most beautiful feeling?” Almost forgetting that there is someone lying next to me, I let out a violent shudder out of sheer surprise, “I could do acid every day.” My friend turns towards me and continues to talk, “but I won’t, because I know this experience won’t be as precious if I can see it all the time, you know?” She continues to mumble something about beauty and the universe, my mind already drifting away from her monologue back to the pulsating pattern on my ceiling.

“I don’t know if I would do this again”, I think to myself right before I fall asleep after being awake for over 20 hours. When the psychedelic effect finally wears off, I slip down the slope of both physical strength and mental excitement and end up staying in bed the whole day. This was my first and only LSD experience.

It was a lot different from what I imagined based on all the documentaries I watched on it. ‘Underwhelming’ might be a better word. In the documentaries, people take LSD and have flashbacks of their traumatic experiences, childhood memories, and their worst fears, and heal from them. Or they hallucinate themselves in a different dimension and have a blast in that imagined world.

The expectation I built from those sources of information was not remotely reached. I saw the ceiling moving funnily, and?
凌晨两点，我躺在地毯上盯着天花板上的花纹。

他们正以一种诡异而美丽的姿态移动着，那样子跟我想象中微生物运动的样子一模一样，随意地扭动。七小时前吞下的酸片还在缓慢地渗入我的意识。“这难道不是最美好的体验吗？”几乎忘了身边还躺着一个人，出于纯粹的意外我打了一个寒战，“我可以每天都吃酸，”我的朋友转向我继续说着，“但是我不会这么做，因为我知道这种经历如果每天体验他就不再独特了，你懂吗？”她还在咕哝着一些美啊宇宙啊什么的，而我的思绪早就从她毫无逻辑的独白里回到了诡异扭动的天花板。

“我不知道我会不会再做这个。”在清醒了20小时后我终于要沉入睡眠，这是我失去意识前最后一个想法。当迷幻剂的作用终于褪去后，我的体力和精力都快速地下滑，导致我在床上躺了一整天。这是我第一次也是唯一一次的迷幻剂体验。

这次体验跟我基于无数关于LSD纪录片所搭建的想象的完全不同平淡无奇或者不尽人意也许能更好描述这次体验。在我想象中，这应该是一个具有变革性，充满灵性，或者至少会让我产生幻觉。在纪录片里，那些服用LSD的人会有对于创伤记忆或者童年记忆的闪回，并与这些记忆和解。或者他们会产生幻觉，以为他们处于另一个宇宙纬度并在这个经历中享受自己。

这些期望远远没有被达到。我看到天花板动了，然后呢？
大约一周前，一张关于中国新疆维吾尔教育营的讲座海报引起了我的注意。在过去的几个月里，我一直在听到西方媒体对于维吾尔集中营的报道：绝大多数在抨击中国政府利用这些不人道的监狱抹杀维吾尔文化和语言，用共产主义价值观洗脑，将维吾尔族的孩子与他们的家人分开。语调多是负面和评判性的。作为回应，中国政府首先试图借助防火墙否认和隐瞒集中营的存在。当耐克和其他服装品牌开始抵制新疆棉花时，中国制作了一部纪录片作为反击，声称这是防止恐怖主义的必要措施。我被夹在中间，接受着两边的信息，被相互矛盾的陈述搞得晕头转向，我很想从真实的维吾尔人那里听到更多的信息，并决定参加关于 Zoom 的讲座。

Zoom 讲座期间，中国国歌正在全音量播放。我刚进入 Zoom 讲座，却被震撼狠狠的固定在椅子上。一帮黑客正在通过在共享屏幕上写中文来破坏讲座，因为他是用鼠标写的，所以字符是歪的，而且很丑。上面写着“中国万岁”、“中国最好”、“祖国永远繁荣昌盛”。Zoom 讲座陷入无法控制的混乱，主讲人只好强制停止。讲座突然停止后，我在椅子呆呆地坐了上至少十分钟。

与我的中国朋友谈论维吾尔人集中营时，我意识到他们中的大多数人都被洗脑了，以至于他们的神经系统根本无法接受任何对中国政府的任何负面评价。我不再试图引发讨论，但我怎么也想不到会有人在大学的讲座里播放中国国歌。他们是觉得这样可以在自己的脑海中屏蔽对中国政府质疑的声音吗？他们这样的行为只告诉我他们深陷于共产党的宣传鼓动中。这样的行为震惊了我。我感受到的强烈羞耻，以至于眼睛酸酸的仿佛要流泪。

我为什么感到羞耻？我不确定。
A lecture poster caught my attention about a week ago: it is on the topic of Uyghur education camps in Xinjiang, China. In the past few months, I have been hearing about how the western media describes the Uyghur education camps: bashing the Chinese government for using these inhumane prisons to erase Uyghur culture and language, brainwashing them with communist values and separating children from their families. The comments are mainly negative and judgemental, in response to which, the Chinese government first tries to deny and conceal the camps’ existence with the help of the great firewall. When Nike and other clothing brands start boycotting Xinjiang cotton, China came up with a documentary claiming it was a necessary measure to prevent terrorism. Receiving information from both sides and being confused by the conflicting narratives, I am curious to hear more information from actual Uyghurs and decide to attend the lecture on Zoom.

The Chinese anthem is blasting at full volume during the Zoom lecture. I arrive at the lecture only to be pinned to my chair in shock. The hacker continues to vandalize the lecture by writing Chinese on the shared screen, the characters are crooked and just plain ugly because he was writing with his mouse. The writing says “中国万岁 (Long live China),” “中国最棒 (China is the best),” “祖国永远繁荣昌盛 (The motherland is forever prosperous).” The Zoom lecture is so disturbed it has to be stopped completely. I kept sitting in my chair for at least another ten minutes after the lecture was abruptly shut down.

What I have realized talking about the Uyghur camps with my Chinese friends is that most of them are so brainwashed that their system literally cannot take in any remotely negative connotation of the Chinese government. I stopped trying to invoke discussions but I would never imagine someone hacking a lecture to preach, to play the Chinese anthem, so they can block out doubtful voices in their own heads. The length they go to is a reflection of how deeply they are stuck in Chinese propaganda. It shocked me. I felt my eyes fogging up from the intense shame I am feeling.

Why was I feeling shameful? I am not sure.
“Did you know that the Chinese government put up a fake sun in Beijing because the air quality is so bad they cannot see anything in the sky?”

Phoenix, an American-born Chinese, looks at me with an eerie blend of pity, curiosity, and condescension. “You know what the craziest part is?” She glares at me with anticipation. “What?” Having never heard of such things, I am partly genuinely interested and partly playing along with her enthusiasm. She takes another inhalation as if that sentence takes that much effort to finish “The craziest part is, the people in Beijing believed it!” Her eyes are almost popping out of her sockets and I can tell she is waiting for my reaction. “What?” I am truly confused. For a moment I am not sure if I heard her wrong or if my English was kind of broken. “

No, it is true. The Chinese government hung up a fake sun to fool the people and they actually believed it!” It is almost like my ignorance of this incident is making her more excited. “I am not surprised you do not know of this because, after all, China has the great firewall.” It is hard to notice but there is a smirk slowly emerging on her face. There is a complicated feeling brewing within me: a mixture of anger at her assumption, confusion about what she described, and fear of it actually being true. I stop talking and just nod and perform in the way that she wants to see — surprised, in awe of her knowledge of the country that I am from, with a glimpse of shame that I did not know as much about my own country as she does. I think I gave a pretty good performance. She walks away satisfactorily with her chin pointing up slightly like a smug character in cartoons. Or maybe I am imagining it.

While Phoenix is not in the room, I start looking up the news with the following keywords: Beijing, fake sun, Tiananmen Square. The first result is an article by the title “No, Beijing residents are NOT watching fake sunrises on giant TVs because of pollution.” In the article, the journalist explains the sunrise was a ten-second clip within a much longer advertisement sequence playing on the big screen. It was not placed there because of the pollution.

I laugh at myself for taking her words seriously and sigh with relief.
“你知道吗，中国政府因为空气质量太差了，在北京放了一个假太阳吗？”

菲尼克斯，一个在美国出生的中国人，看着我的眼神里充满了怜悯、好奇和傲慢。“你知道最疯狂的部分是什么吗？”她期待地瞪着我。“什么？”从来没有听说过这样的事情，部分是真的对她的描述感兴趣，部分是被她的热情逼迫着一起表演。她深深地吸了口气，仿佛那句话费了多大劲才说完似的：“最疯狂的是，北京的人都信了！”她的眼睛快要从眼眶里跳出来了，我看得出来她在等我的反应。“什么？”我真的很困惑。有那么一刻，我不确定我是不是听错了，还是我的英语有点坏。“不，这是真的。中国政府挂了一个假太阳来愚弄人民，他们居然信了！”就好像我对这件事的无知，让她更兴奋了，“你不知道我并不奇怪，因为毕竟中国有防火墙。”很难注意到，但她的脸上慢慢浮现出一丝坏笑。我内心酝酿着一种复杂的感觉：对她的假设感到愤怒，对她所描述的内容感到困惑，以及害怕它实际上是真的。我停止说话，只是点头并以她想看到的方式表演——惊讶，敬畏她对我来自的国家的了解，一瞥我对自己国家的了解不如她多的羞耻做。我认为我的表现相当不错。她满意地走开，下巴微微翘起，就像漫画中的一个自鸣得意的角色。或者，也许我正在想象它。

凤凰不在房间时，我开始用以下关键词查找新闻：北京、假太阳、天安门广场。第一个结果是一篇标题为“不，北京居民不会因为污染而在巨型电视上看假日出”的文章。在文章中，记者解释说日出是在大屏幕上播放的一个更长的广告序列中的一个 10 秒片段。它并不是因为污染放在那里。

我对于自己认真对待她的话觉得好笑，然后松了一口气。

8
“你要和他睡同一张床吗？”

连续一个星期来到我的床边默默流泪后，我妈终于问出了一直困扰她的问题。她的语气里带着浓重的罪恶感，声音甚至因此颤抖，她说话像耳语一样安静，她甚至没有使用“性”这个字。

性，性，性，性，性，性，性。我必须在脑海中默默喊出“性”这个字，因为我知道这正是她要问的。

“我要和交往了三年的男朋友去旅行一周，我当然会他睡在同一张床上”，我默默地在脑中回答。我继续像过去一周那样假装熟睡着，这样我就不必对她的哭泣和问题做出回应。我想大声尖叫，“是的，我要和他一起睡，我已经和他睡过了！”我想问她，为什么她已经通过我父亲阴茎曾在的阴道生下我，却不能大声说出“性”这个字。我想问她为什么她觉得在结婚前做爱会让我贬值，以至于值得在我上飞机之前连续七个晚上到我的床上。

当我在飞机上告诉我男朋友这件事时，我们都笑了。
“Are you going to sleep in the same bed with him?”

After coming to my bed to cry silently next to me for a consecutive week, my mother finally asks the question that has been burdening her mind. She says it with such guilt that her voice begins to shake, the sentence came out like a whisper, and she did not even use the word ‘sex.’

SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX. I have to silently say the word ‘sex’ in my head because I know that is exactly what she is asking.

“I am going on a week-long trip with my boyfriend of three years, so yes I am going to sleep in the same bed with him”, I thought to myself silently. I continue to pretend to be asleep as I have done for the past week so I do not have to react to her crying and the question. I want to scream at the top of my lungs, “Yes I am going to sleep with him and I already have slept with him!” I want to ask her why she cannot even say ‘sex’ out loud when she had given birth to me through her vagina where my dad’s dick was. I want to ask her why having sex before getting married supposedly devalues me so much that it is worth coming to my bed to cry for seven nights in a row before I get on a plane.

When I tell my boyfriend about this incident on the plane, we both laugh.
“Do you know what my biggest regret is?”

It has been a week since my boyfriend and I broke up. This is to be our first civil conversation since. “What?” I am not sure what I was expecting. “My biggest regret is that we did not get to have more sex before we broke up.” He said this ridiculous sentence with such a neutral but affirmative tone that it sounded like the truth. After he says this, he proceeds to try to rape me. I remember crying and calling him pathetic but nothing else. At that moment, I was not sure what this incident had done to my psyche, not until I am writing down this very story. After that incident, I moved to a new city where I know no one. The loneliness and comments my ex made on the use of my body pushed me over the edge of sanity. I started treating my body as a sex object and using meaningless sex to fill the void.

It took me well over a year to process what happened and finally open up to my mother. I ask her to refuse my ex-boyfriend’s visit requests. He has been actively visiting my family even after our break-up. We cry silently together and never speak of him again.
“你知道我最大的遗憾是什么吗？”

我和男朋友分手已经一周了。这是我们此后的第一次文明的对话。“什么？”我不确定我在期待什么。“我最大的遗憾是我们在分手前没做更多。”他用如此中性和肯定的语气说出这个荒谬的句子，甚至听起来像是实话。在他说完这个句子后，他开始试图强奸我。我记得哭着说他真可悲，其他的事情我一概在脑海里抹去了。直到我写下这个故事，我才开始了解这件事对我的心灵造成了什么影响。在那件事之后，我搬到了一个我不认识的新城市。我的前任对我的身体的物质化评论和无尽的孤独感把我推到了理智的边缘。我开始将自己的身体视为性对象，并使用无意义的性来填补空白。

我花了一年多的时间来处理所发生的事情，并最终向我妈妈敞开心扉。我请她拒绝我前男友的探视请求。因为即使在我们分手后，他也一直积极地探望我的家人。我们一起默默地哭泣了一会后，再也没有提起他。
“你变胖了吗？”

我妈透过我手机的小液晶屏看起来很担心。她的眼睛正在寻找我不健康的迹象，她的目光穿过无线网络信号，直直地穿透在我的身体上。“不，我没有。”我叹了口气，“我今天早上才量了，我还是一样的体重。”“你需要锻炼。你胖了一点都不好看。”她继续告诉我保持迷人身材的重要性。在我的一生中可能已经听过这件事一百多次了，我关掉了她的声音，只看到她的小嘴在我的小屏幕上像移动的像素一样。

2019年夏天，我正准备回家去马来西亚度假。知道要去海边，我决定用回去前的两个月减肥，来个“沙滩身材”。我每天锻炼，吃清淡的食物，连续两个月计算每卡路里摄入量，最终减掉了17磅。我感觉很棒，很棒，很漂亮。当我终于在马来西亚与我们的团队在一起时，我们的导游走过来对我说：“哇，你好高大好漂亮。如果你再瘦一点，你就可以当模特了。”那句话让我崩溃了。我多次听到人们对我这么说，但这里的时机非常微妙。我刚刚过了两个月的非人类生活，那一刻我觉得不管我减了多少体重，我永远不会瘦到足够的程度。
“Are you getting fatter?”

My mom looks concerned through the small LCD screen of my phone. Her eyes are searching for signs of me being unhealthy, her gaze burning through the wifi signals right at my physical body. “No, I didn’t.” I sigh, “I just measured myself this morning, I am still the same weight.” “You need to exercise. You do not look good with extra weight.” She continues to lecture me on how important it is to maintain an attractive figure. Having heard of this probably over a hundred times over the time span of my life, I tune out her voice and see her tiny mouth only as moving pixels on my small screen.

In the summer of 2019, I was getting ready to go back home for a family vacation in Malaysia. Knowing that I will be going to the beach, I decided I will use the two months before going back to lose some weight to get a “beach body”. I worked out every day, ate bland food, calculated every calorie intake non-stop for two months, and ended up losing 17 pounds. I felt great, fabulous, and beautiful. When I am finally with the group in Malaysia, our tour guide comes up to me and says, “Wow, you are so tall and beautiful. If only you were skinner, you could be a model.” That sentence broke me. I have heard people say this to me multiple times but the timing here was very delicate. I just lived two months of a non-human-like life, and at that moment I felt no matter how much weight I lose, I will never be skinny enough.
“You have gained 20 pounds in the last year.”

The doctor is comparing notes from my last physical exam, “Is everything ok?”, she asks without looking up. I get really nervous and start stuttering, “I … I don’t feel like I have gained 20 pounds? Should I lose weight?” Sensing my tenseness, my doctor looks up from her notes with her glasses still hanging on the tip of her nose. “No, no, no. Nothing to worry about. It is completely normal for you to gain weight because your organs are developing.” “But would my organs gain 20 pounds over a year?” I feel a little relieved but also confused. She lets out a soft chuckle and shakes her head. “Not 20 pounds but your body measurements are actually better now. You were on the lighter side last year. Now you are perfectly healthy.”

Perfectly healthy? I thought to myself: this might be the first time someone gave me a positive connotation on gaining weight. I do not know how to respond or remember the rest of the physical exam. I walk out thinking: how can I be perfectly healthy after gaining 20 pounds? But if a doctor tells me so, it must be true. Right?
“你比去年重了 20 磅。”

医生正在比较我上次体检的记录，“一切都还好吗？”她头也不抬地问道。我突然感到很紧张，开始结巴，“我……我不觉得我长了 20 磅？我该减肥吗？”感觉到我的窘迫，我的医生从她的笔记中抬起头来，她的眼镜还挂在鼻尖上。“不不不。没什么好担心的。你的体重增加是完全正常的，因为你的器官正在发育。”“但是我的器官会在一年内增加 20 磅吗？”我感到有些欣慰，但也有些困惑。她发出一声轻笑，摇摇头。“可能不会长 20 磅，但你的身体数据现在实际上更好了。去年你在较轻的一边。现在你完全健康了。”

完全健康？我心想：这可能是第一次有人给我增肥的正面的评价。我不知道如何回应，也完全忘记了体检的其余部分。我走出去想：我怎么会增重 20 磅后保持完全健康呢？但如果医生这么说，那一定是真的。对吧？
“你在哭什么？”

我妈一脸困惑和愤怒，“如果哭有用，我跟你一起哭。现在擦干眼泪，想办法解决问题。”我有点被惊呆了，同时还在为大学专业的选择感到精神崩溃。

这是我在美国的第一年。在整个学年的时间跨度里，文化冲击、对未来的恐惧以及对我不想学习化学这件事一直在慢慢压垮我。我觉得我浪费了整整一年，这将摧毁我的整个人生。这句话显然不是事实，但在我生命中的那个特殊时期，它感觉真实且具有灾难性。当我顶着因为因持续失眠而导致的黑眼圈，乘坐20小时的航班回家时，我以为自己回到了一个安全的港湾休息。但相反，我被母亲尖锐的话语击中了，就像旷野上唯一一棵树被闪电击中了一样：无声地燃烧，发出无人能听到的尖叫声。

自从那个寒假以来，我变得沉默并与家人隔绝。我选择默默地受苦，因为我不再将家人视为为我提供庇护的港湾。我不知道的是，在我妈妈因为我情绪化而教育我之后，她开始联系她的朋友寻求建议，并试图为我弄清楚我的生活。但在我找到自己的道路之前，她从来没有告诉过我这些。“如果你落入深渊里，你的家人会来接住你。但是，如果您在迷路时以为自己在坠落，我们不会来帮你的，”她说，“我希望你有最好的结果，因为你是我的孩子，但你必须学会坚强。”妈妈的脸由屏幕上的发光像素组成。我却几乎能感觉到她忍住眼泪时鼻子的酸痛。
Get Vulnerable

“Why are you crying?”

my mother looks confused and agitated, “If crying helped, I would cry with you. Now wipe your tears and figure out how to get out of this situation.” I am partly stunned to speak, and partly in the middle of a mental breakdown about my choice of major in college.

It was my first year in the United States. The cultural shock, fear for the future, and the realization that I do not care to learn about chemistry have been crushing me slowly over the timespan of the academic year. I feel like I have wasted an entire year and have subsequently ruined my entire life. This statement is clearly not true, but at that period of my life, it felt real and catastrophic. When I take that 20-hour flight back home with dark circles from constant insomnia, I think I have come back to a safe harbor to rest. But instead, I am struck by my mother’s sharp words like a stand-alone tree on an open field struck by lightning: silently burning, uttering screams that no one can hear.

I became silent and closed off from my family since that winter break. I chose to suffer in silence because I no longer see my family as the harbor that provides me with shelter. Little did I know that after my mom scorned me for being emotional, she started contacting her friend for suggestions and trying to figure out my life for me. But she never told me any of this until I had found my own path. “If you ever fall, your family is here to catch you. But we are not going to catch you if you think you are falling when you are just lost,” she said “I hope for the absolute best for you because you are my child, but you must learn how to be strong.” My mom’s face is composed of glowing pixels on the screen. Somehow, I can almost feel the soreness of her nose from holding back tears.
“How are you doing?”

“I am doing alright. How are you?” The daily greetings almost become automatic. Just as robotic as the way I learned English in the textbook: “How are you?” “I am fine. Thank you, and you?”

“I know. I know. It must be really difficult for you.” My friend is staring at her screen while listening to me venting. She continues to output comforting sentences that are more predictable than the alphabet. “It is going to be ok.” “I am always here to hear your problems.” “I know exactly how you are feeling.” She just keeps going on and on and on and on… “But you really do not know, do you?”, I think to myself midway through her comforting fluff. I notice the screen reflecting off her, making her eyes look like glass balls and her face glow with cold light. She looks like one of those automated chatbots actualized in reality. I pause and stare at her for a little longer than I should. She does not notice, nor does she look in my direction to meet my gaze. “I am fine, thank you, and you?”

When I left the library workroom and walked through the campus in this foreign land, I realized it is noticeable that everyone is going through their own journey and can barely keep themselves together. I guess the robotic response is the best my friend could have done. I keep walking back to my room, sigh deeply, and fall into a dreamless slumber.
“你过得怎么样？”

“我过得很好。你呢？”每天的问候几乎是自动的。就像我在教科书中学习英语的方式一样机器人：“你过得怎么样？”“我没事。谢谢你，你呢？”

“我知道。我知道。你一定很难受。”我的朋友一边听我埋怨，一边盯着她的屏幕。她继续输出比字母表更可预测的令人欣慰的句子。“会没事的。”“我总是在这里听到你的问题。”“我很清楚你的感受。”她只是不停地不停地不停地不停地......“但你真的不知道，是吗？”，我在她安慰的绒毛中对自己想。我注意到屏幕从她身上反射出来，使她的眼睛看起来像玻璃球，她的脸上散发着冷光。她看起来像是现实中实现的自动聊天机器人之一。我停下来盯着她看了一会儿。她没有注意到，也没有朝我的方向看去与我的目光相遇。“我很好，谢谢你。”

当我离开图书馆的工作室，在这片陌生的土地上走过校园时，我发现每个人都在走自己的路，勉强能保持团结。我想机器人的反应是我朋友能做的最好的。我继续走回自己的房间，深深地叹了口气，陷入了无梦的梦乡。
Bibliography


"Never touch drugs." The policeman sitting across from the table looked back out on his modified wooden table, making it look like a boat. He sat with his legs apart, as if he were preparing for a long journey. His face was lit up by the sun, which he held up to his eye, creating a shadow on his face. He raised his hand, and everyone in the room fell silent. The smoke from my mouth, I realized, quickly drifted across the table, making it look like a sea. I turned to the police officer, sitting on the side of the table, and asked, "I see so many addicts there in the police station. An anti-drug workshop is being held by a policeman clearly addicted to nicotine. I asked him to light a cigarette today and carry on a conversation across from him. One of our friends, who was quite a good communicative person, stepped on the floor of the police station, carefully avoiding the smoke. He laughed, saying, "I wonder what he'll do when that cigarette hits his senses. I feel a bit of irritation and release that I once thought was addiction to nicotine. It's not about the cigarette, but about the experience and how it makes me feel. I'm not sure what this workshop has done other than make my rebellious mind go wild."
This is the beginning of a page of text that appears to be written in Chinese or a language using Chinese characters. The text is not legible enough to extract meaningful content.
你知道我最大的遗憾是什么吗？我和男朋友分手已经一年了。这是我们此生的第一次交往的开始。那时候我还不确定我接吻的定义。第一次接吻是在一个晴朗的下午。在公园里，他用手指在我嘴唇上滑动，然后用吻我的嘴唇。我记得他在我耳边低语，其他的感情我都很清楚，但是现在，我已经好了。我开始明白，我开始在接吻的享受中感到失望。在那个时候，我开始思考，我是否应该珍惜我们的感情。我开始明白，我应该更加珍惜我在接吻的享受中感到的喜悦。在那个时候，我开始思考，我是否应该珍惜我们的感情。我开始明白，我应该更加珍惜我在接吻的享受中感到的喜悦。在那个时候，我开始思考，我是否应该珍惜我们的感情。我开始明白，我应该更加珍惜我在接吻的享受中感到的喜悦。
"You have gained 20 pounds in the last year." The doctor is comparing notes from my last physical exam. "Is everything ok?" she asks without looking up. I get really nervous and start stuttering. "I... I don't feel like I have gained 20 pounds. Should I lose weight?" Sensing my tenseness, my doctor looks up from her notes with her glasses still hanging on the tip of her nose. "No, no, no. Nothing to worry about. It is completely normal for you to gain weight because your organs are developing." But would my organs gain 20 pounds over a year? I feel a little relieved but also confused. She lets out a soft chuckle and shakes her head. "Not 20 pounds but your body measurements are actually better now. You were on the lighter side last year. Now you are perfectly healthy.

Perfectly healthy? I thought to myself. This might be the first time someone gave me a positive connotation on gaining weight. I do not know how to respond or remember the rest of the physical exam. I walk out thinking: how can I be perfectly healthy after gaining 20 pounds? But if a doctor tells me so, it must be true. Right?

"You are 20 pounds overweight," the doctor is now examining my medical records. "Everything else is fine!" she said. She continued, "I think you are doing well. But I am concerned about your weight gain. Is there anything you can do to lower your weight?"

"I am not worried about my weight. I am just not sure how to lose 20 pounds," I replied. "I am trying to eat healthy and exercise more, but it's not working."

"What about your lifestyle? You need to make some changes," the doctor advised. "Try to eat healthier foods, avoid sugary drinks, and increase your physical activity."

"I am already trying to eat healthier, but it's hard to stick to a diet."

"You need to be more consistent," the doctor said. "It's not easy, but it's necessary."

"I understand," I replied. "I will try to make changes in my lifestyle."
I've gained 20 pounds this year. It is concerning notes from my last physical exam are making rounds, but I try not to worry. I am not the only one, as other students have also gained weight. My doctor looked up from her notes and said, "It's not that. It's the tip of her nose. It's completely normal. Weight gain is a natural progression of life."

But my organs gained 20 pounds over a year? I feel a little lost, a little confused. She cut out a soft chuckle and said, "Not in pounds, but your body measures. You are on the lighter side of health."

"Healthy," I thought to myself. The notion of something personal changing this might make someone feel a positive connection to weight. I do not know how to express or even the rest of the physical exam. I was not thinking about perfectly healthy anymore. 20 pounds!

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A common statement from my old friends was, "You're in college, you're on your own." I felt like I was lost in the wilderness. I asked myself, "What is this?"

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